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ABSTRACT

A study examined the mass media usage of deaf Nebraskans. Two categories were formulated to aid in selection of respondents: "experts," composed of individuals who have special training to teach deaf persons or to teach interpreters for the deaf; and "non-experts," consisting of individuals who have had no special deaf education training. Twenty respondents were selected, 10 "experts" and 10 "non-experts." Face-to-face structured interviews were conducted with the subjects. Analysis of the interview transcripts revealed two orientations, or points of view, toward using mass media, "appreciative" and "improvement-oriented." Results also indicated that: (1) those interviewed were found to be active audience members who understood their communication needs and how to use mass media to meet those needs; (2) the respondents indicated that the mass media, especially local media, were not meeting their needs; (3) most reported using complex communication links that may or may not have been satisfying; (4) respondents reported bundling their information by reading local newspapers, watching television and television news, and often calling others using the telecommunication device for the deaf (TDD), or by using telephone relay services for the deaf; and (5) those in the "improvement-oriented group" voiced strong opinions that deaf people should be interviewed and quoted in news stories about the deaf. Findings suggest that managers, editors, reporters, and journalism educators should work to enhance mass media resources for deaf Nebraskans. (Seventeen footnotes are included; 15 references are attached.) (RS)

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Disabled Persons and Mass Media Usage: Deaf Nebraskans Offer Their Viewpoints

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In its call for papers for the 1992 AEJMC convention, the Committee on the Status of Disabled People solicited responses in ten areas, yet, while these listed suggestions are certainly both worthy and timely, the present paper is offered on another topic, namely, mass media usage among the disabled themselves. We do this in the belief that a better understanding of *how* the disabled use media would be a positive addition to discussion of curricula and policy formulation in journalism education.

The disabled are no more a group to be considered in monolithic terms than any other group. They are certainly as individualistic as, say, are women, African-Americans, Asians and so forth. Obvious differences exist *between groups* of disabled people as well as *between individuals within* any one of these groups, and thus it follows that studies of media usage by disabled people would be wise. This paper does not consider differences between groups, rather it reports, as an example, an exploratory look at mass media usage among deaf Nebraskans.

Deaf media usage has been little studied academically. Studies of media usage among the deaf were found to have focused solely on students. In 1980, Andrews conducted a study of 140 junior high school students in the Maryland School for the Deaf. She found that boys watched television slightly more than girls, that the students felt television should not be permitted in class, and that

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85 per cent of the students surveyed felt more programs should be close-captioned.[1] In 1983 and again in 1984, Austin reported that hearing-impaired students viewed television differently than hearing students, using it more for information. Close captioning was greatly enjoyed by the hearing-impaired students.[2] In 1986, Braden surveyed deaf students entering college and found they read about 10 books a year, about four magazines a month and six newspapers a week.[3] None of these studies addressed the usage of mass media among a wide range of deaf people.

Research with Deaf Nebraskans

Two studies about mass media involving deaf Nebraskans have been conducted. To commence inquiry into media use, a preliminary survey of mass media usage of 117 deaf Nebraskans was conducted in 1984.[4] The survey's major findings were: 67 percent of those queried subscribed to newspapers or magazines for the deaf, 86 percent subscribed to daily newspapers, 49 percent subscribed to other general circulation magazines, 76 percent owned Telecommunication Devices for the Deaf (TDDs), 83 percent owned closed-caption decoders, 86 percent watched closed-captioned programs, and 62 percent reported they watched HI-VIS (Hearing Impaired Video

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[1]Jean Andrews, "Our Eyes Are Always on TV—Deaf Teens Survey Peers," *American Annals of the Deaf*, Dec. 1980, pp. 1082-1085.

[2]Bruce A. Austin, "Motivations for Television Viewing Among Deaf and Hearing Students," *American Annals of the Deaf*, Feb. 1984, pp. 17-22. Bruce A. Austin with John W. Myers, "Hearing-Impaired Viewers of Prime-Time Television, *Journal of Communication*, Autumn 1984, pp. 60-71.

[3]Jeffery P. Braden, "Reading Habits and Preferences of Deaf Students Beginning Postsecondary Programs," *American Annals of the Deaf*, July 1986, pp. 253-256.

[4]Carla R. Engstrom and Jill Stofen-Fisher, "A Preliminary Survey of Mass Media Usage by Deaf Nebraskans," University of Nebraska-Lincoln. A paper presented to the Nebraska Commission for the Hearing Impaired, 1985.

Information Service).[5] That preliminary survey was followed by more in-depth research in 1989-1990 in which face-to-face structured interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis in order to learn more about how mass media were used.[6] The remainder of the present paper will concentrate on this study to provide an example of mass media usage research.

In exploratory studies interview respondents and questions asked should be designed to enhance the possibility for divergent viewpoints to emerge and also to increase possibilities for differing perspectives within a small sample. Utilizising the George Carslake Thompson scheme[7], as adapted by William Stephenson,[8] two categories were formulated to aid in selection of respondents: "Experts," composed of individuals who have special training to teach deaf persons or to teach interpreters for the deaf, and "Non-Experts," consisting of individuals who have had no special deaf education training. Twenty respondents were selected, ten classified as "Experts" and ten as "Non-Experts." When the study was conducted, there were some 560 deaf individuals known to reside in Nebraska.[9]

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[5]HI-VIS, established in 1982 by the Nebraska Legislature, is superimposed over Line 21 of the Nebraska Educational Television Network's signal. HI-VIS, operated by NETV and the Nebraska Commission for the Hearing Impaired, uses weather information and local stories about deaf people and events to supply the text.

[6]Carla R. Engstrom, "An Exploratory Study of Deaf Nebraskans' Mass Media Usage," (unpublished master's thesis, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 1991).

[7]George Carslake Thompson, "The Evaluation of Public Opinion," reprinted in B. Berleson and M. Janowitz (Eds.), *Reader in Public Opinion and Communication*, 2nd ed. (New York: Free Press, 1966), pp. 7-12.

[8]William Stephenson, *The Play Theory of Communication*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), chaps. 1, 3, 4.

[9]Nebraska Commission for the Hearing Impaired, voluntary census, April 1991. Interestingly, the Official 1990 U. S. Census form contained no questions about hearing impairment.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Respondents ranged in age from 23 to their late 60s. One person did not think of herself as a member of the deaf community, and another thought of herself as being able to operate in "three worlds," namely, the hearing, the hard of hearing and the deaf. The others identified themselves as deaf community members. Twelve individuals preferred to use American Sign Language only, seven talked and signed simultaneously, and one person talked only.[10]

Of those who had been classified as "Experts," six were women and four were men, five were from Omaha and two resided in Lincoln while the others were from various Nebraska towns. Of the "Non-Experts," six were men and four were women, six were from Omaha and four were from Lincoln.

In the "Expert" group, five are actively teaching/interpreting, one is an educational administrator, one is a coordinator of school activities, two are retired from government jobs working with the deaf and one is a government employee and part-time sign language instructor. In the "Non-Expert" category, four are residential school house parents, two are tradesmen, one is a homemaker and three are clerical workers.

Of the 20 interviewees, five had graduated from high school, four reported some post-secondary schooling and 11 were post-secondary graduates. Ten of the respondents attended the Nebraska School for the Deaf in Omaha, and one attended the Iowa School for the Deaf in Council Bluffs, five attended the Nebraska School for the Deaf and a mainstream program, and four attended public schools.

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[10]How a person refers to himself/herself has been shown to be of importance. For a commentary on this topic regarding the deaf, please see Jack R. Gannon, *Deaf Heritage: A Narrative History of Deaf America*, (Silver Spring, Maryland: National Association of the Deaf, 1981), pp. 359-376.

The traditional funnel-interviewing method was employed,[11] which allowed questions to start at a broad level and gradually narrow as the interview proceeded. Respondents were encouraged to express their attitudes, opinions and orientations toward mass media usage. This method of research is ideal for exploratory inquiry into the commonality and variance among persons and gives respondents freedom to express themselves in their own language, describing what issues are important and how they process, put together and/or associate attitudes.

Eleven general, open-ended interview questions were developed and used. Probe questions also were developed to try to elicit a longer, more substantial response without leading the respondents. When respondents mentioned newspapers, television or other mass media, they were asked to explain more about what they mentioned. To maintain accuracy, interviews conducted in manual communication by the hearing interviewer were videotaped, then transcribed into text.[12] Transcripts of the interviews were examined and responses from the 20 individuals were initially grouped following the schedule of questions. The grouping was by broad subject such as statements about television, newspapers, closed captioning, telephones and other mass media issues. Within each subject area, responses regarding accessibility, interpersonal communication and respondents' other concerns were examined. Convergent attitudes and opinions emerged from these groupings.

Two Viewpoints about Mass Media Usage

Analysis of the interview transcripts revealed two orientations, or points of view, toward using mass media, "Appreciative" and "Improvement-oriented." "Appreciative" respondents tended to

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[11]Fred N. Kerlinger, *Foundations of Behavioral Research*, 2nd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1973), p. 483.

[12]Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to two hours in length. To transcribe the tapes, a typist sat in front of an IBM-compatible computer to record translated data as a professional interpreter voiced aloud the interviewees' videotaped statements as they played onto a television screen from a VHS recorder. For every hour of interviews, two to three hours of translation/transcription time was required.

describe their mass media us mostly in terms of the personal benefits of media. "Improvement-oriented" tended to center on ways to improve deaf people's access to media and often voiced strong opinions about what media should and should not do. Neither orientation could have been predicted solely upon demographic variables nor upon being classified as "Expert" or "Non-Expert."

Print Media

Respondents reported reading newspapers in much the same manner as has been found in studies of hearing newspaper readers.[13] They said they read a newspaper regularly, usually read it at the same time and in the same place, and usually read the same news and features in the same order every time they read. Of the 20 persons interviewed, 13 could be said to have an "Appreciative" orientation toward newspapers. However, the other seven respondents, classified as "Improvement-oriented," tended to focus more on issues regarding newspapers that they said needed improving when it comes to dealing with the deaf and with deaf issues.

"Appreciative" respondents tended to emphasize the benefits of newspaper reading for themselves and for others. They reported reading a newspaper regularly, usually every day, enjoying the paper for their own purposes, keeping up on current news and happenings, and reading and using the advertising. Seven of the 13 specifically said they depend upon a local newspaper as their major sources of news, especially for local news because local television news was not closed captioned. The other six reported using a newspaper for a variety of purposes but did not rank it as their major news source.

For example, a male "Non-Expert," said television is his major source of news, and although he did not subscribe to a newspaper, he said he often reads two newspapers at work.

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[13]Michael Stricklin, Wilma Crumley, Lewis Zager, "Mass Media Technology and Bundling Behavior: A Ludenic Perspective." A paper presented to the Eastern Communication Association, Ocean Park, Maryland, 1980.

A "Non-Expert" woman who considered newspapers her major source of news said, "I like to read any kind of news...I like to read about what's going on because (local) TV news isn't closed captioned, so you have to read the Omaha newspaper."

An "Expert" man explained why the newspaper was welcomed when he noted,

> Local TV news is really bad...I see a picture and I don't know if somebody was killed or a body carried off or what. So I get my newspaper the next day and page through to see what happened. You see (news) on the TV, then the next day you want to read what it was about.

Being appreciative, however, does not mean that respondents could not be critical of newspapers; at times they were. A "Non-Expert" man, who has a daily newspaper reading ritual that he said he enjoys, stated his major criticism like this: The newspapers always print negative news because people won't read positive news.

On topics that are meaningful to these respondents, a variety of media sources appeared to be necessary to be satisfying, and various technologies were said to be used to obtain that information. All 13 reported watching television in addition to reading a newspaper for news. This combination demonstrates "mass media bundling behavior." These respondents, much like findings among their hearing counterparts, described using a variety of sources, even if some sources are not as satisfying as others.

"Improvement-oriented" respondents, however, tended to focus on issues they deemed need improving. Four of the seven were classified as "Experts," and three of the seven were women. An "Expert" man noted how essential it was for newspapers to quote deaf sources directly when he explained how important it was,

> ...to use deaf people in their reports when they are talking about issues related to deaf people...it is important to get an interpreter when you have a deaf person involved so there is no misunderstanding...You can't use the hearing people's words and let them speak for us. I want to speak for myself...like any other individual in the United States...The deaf people would be happy to set up an interview. They could contact me and I would be happy to set up things. When they write, they should go directly to us.

A "Non-Expert" said he was not aware of any deaf reporters or editors at Nebraska newspapers and offered a suggestion for improving access and understanding for deaf persons when he said, "Hire deaf reporters. The editors should get correct information about deafness. Then they should coordinate with us about our activities and events."

A "Non-Expert" woman explained how to improve newspaper access for deaf persons and for hearing persons who want to better understand the deaf,

> ...maybe we could have a place in the newspaper for deaf news or deaf activities. Not necessarily every day but on certain days, maybe like Wednesday and Sundays, have a place for deaf news, events, whatever.

An "Expert" man expressed his criticism about newspapers when he said,

> I notice that the (Omaha) World-Herald is biased against handicapped people. They try to reduce it and make everything sensational about deafness. For instance, I have a big complaint about a story they did on one of our students who was interested in art. He was a mentally retarded boy. And then there was another story about a house parent beating a student, and the stories were placed next to each other. That's not right. They always do that.

"Improvement-oriented" respondents also indicated they bundled their mass media sources. A "Non-Expert" man described his bundling of newspapers and television,

> I have a decoder for national news. For local news, the decoder does me no good. I have to guess what happened, but most of the time I'm not right. I have to depend on the newspaper to find out what happened.

Television

When it comes to television viewing, respondents reported that they wanted to use television in the same manner as hearing television viewers; however, some differences were reported. If given a choice, all respondents said they had a preference for closed-captioned programs, especially closed captioning of the local news. But unlike the hearing population, those interviewed said deaf viewers have an additional burden in that they must keep their eyes on the screen to follow all of what is being said.

An "Expert" woman explained why she must keep her eyes on the screen,

> I like to watch TV, but if the telephone rings and I have to sit there and type on the TDD (Telecommunication Device for the Deaf) and turn away and look at the TDD, I lose a lot of the movie that way. Sometimes, I have to tell the person on the line, I'm sorry there's something wrong with the TDD, would you repeat that, I missed it, but I won't tell them why...if there's a good movie on I hate to be bothered... Then I see the flashing light, I think maybe I won't answer, but I better answer, maybe it's an emergency. I go answer the phone, but I make it a short conversation.

An "Expert" man noted that reading all the closed captions can be tiring when he described his viewing techniques,

> I only watch it with captions. I enjoy it more when I get to read it...much more... but sometimes I get real tired watching the TV...like the national news, I want to know what's happening, but it's hard. I have to keep my eyes on the sentence and look up at the action. For example, a preacher I find pretty boring, I'd rather watch action.

Of the 20 respondents, 11 could be said to have an "Appreciative" orientation toward closed-captioned television. All of these respondents expressed a desire to have the local news captioned. They also reported they enjoyed watching television more with captions and were appreciative of the technology that brought captions to their screens. Eight of the 11 were women. Seven had been classified as "Non-Experts" and four as "Experts." A "Non-Expert" man said,

> I can hear the background sounds with my hearing aid but I mostly read the closed captions. I appreciate that kind of invention...every TV station should have more and more closed captions so anyone with a hearing loss will be able to see the television programs.

An "Expert" said she increases her vocabulary with the captions, adding, "I prefer the captions so that I can learn the words. With an interpreter I know the signs, but with captioning I learn words."

A "Non-Expert" woman said,

> If it says CC I will watch it. If there's no CC, I don't even bother to watch

> because you don't know what they're talking about. I just forget it...Deaf people can't watch anything local...I wish it was closed captioned, otherwise I have to read the newspaper.

A "Non-Expert" man explained his preference for closed-captioned shows,

> I'd like to see close captioning on all programs...because deaf people don't understand...how the hearing people are communicating. Like deaf children who have hearing parents they ask what they say on TV and the parents have to explain again and again and again. That happened to me...When I was young I didn't have closed captioning and I had to ask my parents and they got tired of me asking what was going on...I prefer captions because the interpreter is so small and hard to see.

As for getting weather warnings, a "Non-Expert" indicated she must consult more than one mass medium, plus using interpersonal contact is a must,

> ...if a tornado would hit us how would we get information? We could talk to the police or to a neighbor. But that's not good. Sometimes, you can't trust your neighbor. Or maybe our daughter will contact us if she hears something. She'll drive to our house and let us know. Usually, we try to listen with our hearing aids or we watch the TV...it's not captioned but we watch the picture and guess what's going on.

The other nine "Improvement-oriented" respondents discussed their captioned viewing in appreciative terms and indicated how they bundled their media sources, but, more so than the "Appreciative" orientation, they tended to center on ways to improve deaf people's access of television including descriptions of actions they had taken personally or had contemplated taking. All nine expressed a desire to see more closed captioning, especially of local news. Two were women. Three had been classified as "Non-Experts" and six as "Experts."

To get local captioning, an "Expert" man said, "For the local news, I asked them to caption it...It's important. I'd try to bring them information on how they could caption the different situations." He also explained some of his viewing tendencies,

> I'm so spoiled with captions that I refuse to watch programs without captioning... Even if it's a good new movie, I'll just wait until it's captioned...I'm not going to watch something I can't understand. It wastes my time. Hearing people wouldn't listen to TV without a voice, so why should I?

As for television sporting events, he said,

> They caption sports, but you can see it...Sometimes, they put the caption right across the plays. Then you want to know what happened behind the caption, it was blocked. Maybe the football goes under the caption. That's bad. They should change the system where they break the screen a little bit...I rather see the plays myself..Sometimes they'll be playing golf and it'll be right across the swing and you can't see what happens. The caption comes up and you go, "Not now, later." With a car race, it might be okay, because you can kind of see what's going on. Sometimes they put the caption on at the worst possible time.

As for closed-captioned advertising, he said he was more appreciative of it, "I didn't know the vocabulary of advertising before. I'll look at it and go, 'Wow, that's a new word for me'...But, if the advertisement is not captioned, I'm not interested."

An "Expert" man went a step further than stating his preference for closed captioning, wanting a channel for the deaf community,

> I wish we had a channel for the deaf...the leaders at the TV (station) could be deaf...like the board of directors...deaf people would get excited about that kind of TV, if the deaf people were involved and questioned.

His comments continued with suggestions for content of closed-captioning programs produced by deaf people on cable television,

> Cable TV has some programs for Mexicans, blacks and a deaf program from California, but I don't want to hear about California. I want to learn about what's happening here in the Midwest...I wish they would contact deaf people in Nebraska for information.

An "Expert" man talked about his frustration of not understanding local news and how he would like to have the opportunity to bundle his sources of information,

> There's no local captioning, no local news. I would talk to the TV station manger about captioning the local news...We want to catch up on the news instead of waiting until the morning to read the newspaper. That's too late. The TV could help us a lot.

Another "Non-Expert" man talked about how cable companies need to be accessible to deaf individuals,

> Many deaf people think it's important that (Omaha's) Cox Cable have a TTY, but they don't...NCHI (Nebraska Commission for the Hearing Impaired) offered to loan Cox Cable a TTY, but we never heard back...If the deaf people have questions, we can't contact them...In the TV Guide, sometimes it lists the program as closed captioned, but Cox Cable has not flipped the switch and we can't get in touch with them to tell them.

An "Expert" woman said captioned news is important for the hard of hearing,

> ...because some of them cannot hear the speech without writing...We are putting forth some effort to get the news captioned...It needs to be done because there are people who do not know sign language and cannot hear well enough with hearing aids to hear the news that is spoken. They do need the captions.

An "Expert" man indicated that he worries when it comes to local weather warnings,

> Often I get so frustrated trying to watch the news and I just have to guess what the TV people are saying...sometimes I'm wrong and sometimes I'm right...If there's bad weather, I live on assumptions. That's not right, because TV operates on our airwaves and we have a right to captioned news...Every night I watch local captioned news on the Chicago station, I subscribe to cable TV to watch that. I really learn a lot about their local news and I really wish Omaha could get close to that and have their own captioned news for deaf people.

Captioned Videos and Films

Regarding closed-captioned videos and films, 11 respondents mentioned using either captioned videos or films. Of these, nine expressed appreciation regarding the captioning service. Five were women. Four had been classified as "Non-Experts" and five as "Experts." Expressions of appreciation ranged from providing opportunities for the family to spend more time together, to simply enjoying movies or saving money.

Along lines similar to descriptions of other media use, "Appreciative" respondents described their use mostly in terms of personal benefits of closed-captioned videos and films. A "Non-Expert" woman said,

> ...we use the VCR just like the hearing...even videos are closed captioned so we can rent movies instead of going downtown...If you have five in the family you have to pay $15, whereas, if you get a video it's only $2. It would be great one day if the movies themselves were CC...I don't know if they can improve the technology, but right now we're satisfied with TV. And it does tend to make the

> families stay home more often and socialize, at least, they are keeping up with the world.

Another "Non-Expert" woman said,

> It would be nice if the theaters had captioned movies. But we can't complain anymore, we have to wait a while...think of the majority of deaf people. When they go there they can't understand what's going on. They have to go by the action of the movies. So instead of going, they wait for it to come out on tape.

Two of the respondents discussed captioned videos and films in terms of how they would improve a deaf person's access to the media. One was a woman who had been classified as an "Expert." The other was a "Non-Expert" man. The Expert said she would give more information to educate theater owners and the deaf when she explained,

> People who work in the theater don't know about the deaf's needs. I would inform them. Deaf people should ask the movie people for discounts...because I am not hearing what is said...If an interpreter stood there that would be fine, I'd pay $6 for that, that would make sense.

The "Non-Expert" man said that he tells video stores to get a closed-caption decoder to check all movie titles for deaf watchers.

> [A video rental business] has...a book that you can read the titles of all the captioned movies. But the new video stores don't have that. Sometimes it'll say captioned on the box...You bring it home, put it in and there will be no captions. It makes me angry. You go back and tell them and they exchange it for another tape. I've told them at the store, you should have your own machine. That way you could see if there were captions on it. But they don't have their own decoder.

Discussion

Those interviewed were found to be active audience members who understand their communication needs and how to use mass media to meet those needs. Unfortunately, the deaf respondents also indicated that the mass media, especially local media, are not meeting their needs. On topics that they said are important to them, most reported using complex communication links that may or

may not be satisfying. They said these links include both mass media and interpersonal communication. The respondents reported bundling their information by reading local newspapers, watching television and television news, and often, as part of the process, calling others using the TDD, or by using telephone relay services for the deaf, or driving to other deaf people's home to pass along news and information gleaned from the media.

Respondents in both groups indicated that the local mass media are not taking care of their news and information needs. They said that is one of the main reasons why deaf Nebraskans must depend so heavily upon newspapers.

One group of respondents expressed "appreciation" for having newspapers and television that offered local news, while also enjoying them for their own purposes. More news and information about the deaf community would be appreciated by this group.

Those in the "Improvement-oriented" group voiced strong opinions that deaf people should be interviewed and quoted in news stories about the deaf, interpreters should be present for such interviews, more local news of the deaf community should be published and broadcast, and employment opportunities for deaf people should be offered in both print and television news operations.

How can managers, editors and reporters contact deaf people in their community? Since passage of the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act, all state are required to provide a TDD relay service. This service allows deaf and hearing individuals to communicate through the telephone. A reporter can call the relay service and an operator will use a TDD to contact the deaf source. The conversation will go back and forth through the operator. The relay number can be obtained from a state's agency on the deaf or hearing impaired. In addition, all states' relay numbers are listed in

the *International Directory for Text Telephone Users*.[14] Instead of using a third party to conduct an interview, a news organization could purchase a TDD to allow direct calls.

How can news organizations start to develop a contact list for the deaf community? Start with the state's or community's association for the deaf. Contact the president of these organizations and start going to the group's meetings and sporting events to get a feel for the issues. And, building upon advice from deaf Nebraskans, assuming all deaf people read lips would be an error.

How can interpreters be hired for interviews? Of course reporters can ask the deaf person they are contacting to find an interpreter he or she prefers. Or, they can use the International Directory for Text Telephone Users to find interpreter services or call their state's agency for the deaf to discover how to obtain qualified interpreters.

Since all respondents reported enjoying television more with captions, it is not surprising that almost half of them were found to be "Improvement-oriented" and actively seeking ways to get the local news closed captioned.

The concerns expressed, especially by those identified as being "Improvement-oriented," sometimes bordered on frustration. One possible explanation for their frustration may be related to more general concerns about communicating with hearing society, and thus would help explain why these respondents emphasized differences between themselves and the hearing. Their level of concern can at times be high and provides supporting evidence for how actively these respondents are seeking to be "in the know."

While respondents were concerned about restricted access to television due to their deafness and limited availability of closed captioning, they do use the mass media extensively. These respondents explained, often in eloquent terms, how they are using the media to allay their worries and to participate more fully in American society. Those identified as "Appreciative" would like to

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[14] *1992 International Directory for Text Telephone Users*, published by Telecommncations for the Deaf, Inc., 8719 Colesville Road, Suite 300, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910; (301) 589-3006 [TDD]; (301) 589-3786 [voice]; (301) 589-3707 [FAX].

have access to appreciate, and those identified as "Improvement-oriented" are willing to take action to get that access.

The "Improvement-oriented" offered suggestions to enhance mass media for deaf Nebraskans. Local TV news is only now becoming more accessible in Nebraska. WOWT, Channel 6, in Omaha, is the first Nebraska station to offer closed-captioned local news, however, "live" comments are not captioned, only previously prepared stories are captioned. The NBC-affiliate started doing so in late January 1991. Even with the passage of the 1990 ADA, Nebraska newspaper and wire service newsrooms do not offer a TDD number. "Improvement-oriented" respondents said more stations should be encouraged to purchase—and monitor—captioning services. Newspapers, wire services and television stations should be encouraged to buy TDDs. Local television advertisers should be encouraged to caption their ads. All these would be applauded by the respondents. Of course, state or local agencies and associations for the hearing impaired should be called upon for in-service training.

The "Improvement-oriented" respondents also said they did not want to be taken care of. They said they wanted deaf people to be able to participate more fully in mass media. When stories are about deafness, these respondents said that deaf people should be interviewed. They said media should be better informed about the deaf community and could achieve this by hiring deaf reporters or sign language interpreters.

As Gannon suggested, don't assume that deaf people want to be called hearing impaired. Treat the topic like courtesy titles, ask what the person prefers. Others have made this point, too. Some individuals see themselves as part of the "deaf community," others prefer to identify with the "hearing community."[15]

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[15]Charlotte Baker and Carol Padden, *American Sign Language: A Look at its History, Structure and Community*. (Silver Spring, Maryland: T. J. Publishers, Inc., 1978), pp. 3-4.

Thoughts from the "Improvement-oriented" further suggest that the deaf community could be encouraged to form a "clearinghouse" of information for local media. One idea might be that the state's Association of the Deaf could provide the local media with basic news by seeking grants to fund a public relations position. Also, funding for scholarships could be sought to encourage deaf students to attend journalism programs, and news organizations can offer internship programs or hire deaf college stringers.

At present, there are no journalism programs for deaf students. Gallaudet University, the world's only liberal arts college for the deaf, has a broadcasting program but offers no journalism classes. Few news organizations now employ deaf people as reporters or editors. Karen Meyer, a part-time reporter on WLS-TV in Chicago is the only deaf person covering deaf issues on television in the U.S.[16] If the disabled are to be integrated into journalism education, special programs to train them are likely to be required. This is particularly true in working with the deaf, who communicate in a different language—American Sign Language—and must use an interpreter to communicate with an English speaker. Further study is required to determine what programs would be best for aspiring deaf journalists.

Equally as important, when journalism educators start to teach students how to cover the deaf community, they will need to get the deaf community involved. Deaf presenters should be invited to class to discuss current deaf issues, how they perceive the media and how they think the media perceives them. At most state-funded colleges, affirmative action or equal opportunity programs can provide interpreters. Students also should learn how to contact and converse with deaf news sources, requiring training in awareness of relay services, government agencies for the hearing-impaired and deaf organizations.

Another suggestion implied by the findings would be for the National Association of the Deaf, AEJMC, the American Newspaper Publishers Association, the American Society of Newspaper

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[16] Rod Granger, "Deaf TV reporter is voice for the disabled," *Electronic Media*, March 9, 1992, p. 35.

Editors, Radio-Television News Directors Association and the National Association of Broadcasters to consider sponsoring periodic seminars for journalists to discuss deaf community concerns and to seek specific improvements in such areas as local news, public affairs programming and weather warnings. This also could be done on state and local levels. Similar seminars also would likely be beneficial to raise awareness of the media needs and use of other groups of disabled people.

The conclusions of this study echo a challenge given by Gallaudet University President I. King Jordan to the American Society of Newspaper Editors in 1990. Signing to the conference, Jordan said:

> The print media, and especially newspapers, have always been very important to deaf people. Because we depend on our eyes for virtually all of the information we receive, we have always been big consumers of newspapers. What's more, deaf printers have been the backbone of many newspapers in this country. We have been your big supporters. I am calling on you now to provide some support for us.[17]

[17]I. King Jordan, speech to the American Society of Newspaper Editors, Washington, D. C., April 1990.

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